

Introduction to Philosophy of the Social Sciences



Instructor: Karen Brown
E-mail: klbrown@uvic.ca
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 - 3:30
Fridays 12:00 - 1:00
and by appointment

Live Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Wednesdays
1:30 to 2:20

Course Description

In carrying out their work social scientists, knowingly or not, take up positions on philosophical issues. Their choices display beliefs about the kinds of questions the social sciences can answer, what methods are most likely to produce knowledge in their fields and what kind of knowledge we should be looking for. They cast their nets for causal mechanisms or for accounts of meaning. They pin their hopes on empirical methods or on interpretive strategies. They see success in accurate predictions or in an understanding of human experience from the inside. Their choices reveal their underlying philosophy of social science. This course will explore the reasons for choosing one way or another on these issues as we unearth and evaluate the philosophical foundations of the social sciences.

We will begin by considering what makes the social sciences so different from the natural sciences. Then we'll explore the strengths and weaknesses of approaching the social world through behaviourism, functionalism, rational choice theory, social construction theory, standpoint theory, philosophical anthropology and evolutionary psychology. Along the way we will look into the current crisis of replication failures in the social sciences, explore the complexities of the push for evidence-based policy, consider the value of participatory research and investigate the disconnect between philosophical accounts of well being and constructs of well-being in the social sciences.

Class Meetings

All of our class meetings will be conducted over Zoom. You'll s0.2 (e) -25.6 (Z(s)2)-54ctee -080.1

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Texts

Both books are available through the UVic Book Store as both paper editions and ebooks.

Nancy Cartwright and Eleonora Montuschi, eds. **Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction**. Oxford University Press. 2014.

Alexander Rosenberg. **Philosophy of Social Science**. Fifth Edition. Westview Press. 2015.

All additional readings will be available on the Brightspace page.

Course Work

Submitting Take-home Exams

Your take-home exams must be submitted on-line through Brightspace. Specific instructions and times submissions are due are posted on Brightspace along with the the exam questions and advice on how to do well on these exams.

You'll have one week to write each of the take-home exams. Unexcused **late submissions** will immediately lose 5% and will lose an additional 5% every 24 hours. If the lateness was unavoidable let me know so that we can waive the late penalty.

Online Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice and short answer quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. Each quiz will be available on Brightspace for 8 hours. So you can choose when in that 8 hour window you want to take it. But once you open the quiz you will have only 30 minutes to submit your answers. Information about what to expect on individual quizzes will be

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Course Schedule *continued*

November 3, 4 Chapter 8: European Philosophy of Social Science **R**
Chapter 9: Holism and Antireductionism in Sociology and
Psychology **R**

November 6 **Q u i z 3** opens at noon —closes at 8 p.m.

Reading Break — November 9 through November 11

November 17, 18 Eleonora Montuschi “Scientific Objectivity” **C/M**
Sharon Crasnow “Feminist Standpoint Theory” **C/M**
Alison Wylie “Community-Based Collaborative